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UNCLAS TAIPEI 003263

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SUBJECT: RUNWAY ACCIDENT CLOSES TAIPEI'S SUNGSHAN AIRPORT

A runway accident forced the closure of Taipei's Sungshan Airport last night. A TransAsia Airlines Airbus A320 slipped off the runway at 8:04 pm on October 18 after a flight from Hualien, Taiwan. The aircraft was damaged but all 100 passengers and 6 crewmembers were unharmed. It took some time for airport crews to clear the damaged plane, so the airport, which has only one runway, was closed to all flights until 10:30 am the following morning. In all, the accident caused the cancellation of 30 flights. Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) blamed a wet runway for the accident. However, Taiwan's Aviation Safety Council, an agency independent of the CAA, will conduct an investigation to determine whether equipment failure or human error contributed to the accident.

PAAL